

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Hetherington Gives Mixed Reviews to 2005 Session



Rep. John Hetherington, R-125th, New Canaan, Norwalk, said the 2005 legislative session achieved several accomplishments, but left major business incomplete.

Rep. Hetherington noted that the number one priority for Fairfield County, replacing the aging, unreliable Metro-North commuter rail fleet, required a special session to

achieve a final vote by both the state House and Senate.

The \$1 billion transportation improvement package will upgrade Metro-North along with removing several bottlenecks on I-95. It was expected to be approved at a special session June 27.

The 2005 session of the General Assembly offered pluses and minuses, Rep. Hetherington said.

On the plus side:

1. We have agreement on the new rail cars and improvements on Metro-North. The new rail cars are several years away, but at least they are rolling towards us. The legislature should have done it sooner, but that can't be remedied.
2. We approved \$10 million for stem cell research. This is good for our economy and offers hope that in the future we may have exciting new treatments for people suffering from a variety of injuries and diseases.
3. We continued to see progress in making our environment better and by passing the next generation of a clean cars legislation.
4. We passed a prohibition on the use hand-held cell phones while driving.
5. We adopted a requirement that electronic voting machines create a paper trail.
6. We enacted important protections against identity theft by giving consumers the opportunity to freeze their credit records unless they consent to a report.

On the minus side:

1. The legislature adopted a \$31-billion budget that increases spending 12% over two years and raises taxes. Among the is a new estate tax that cuts in at \$2 million with a 5.085 percent rate that goes back to the first dollar. It is retroactive to January 1, 2005. The budget also puts a 20 percent surcharge on business income

- taxes. Separately, the legislative majority extended the real property conveyance tax to July 1, 2007, in spite of repeated promises that it was only temporary.
2. The majority once again declined to provide relief from spiraling medical malpractice premiums.
 3. The House and Senate failed to follow the lead of Governor Rell by adopting real campaign finance reform.
 4. The city-dominated legislature not only continued an unfair educational cost sharing formula, but also increased funding for the three big cities with little left over for smaller towns.

Representative John Hetherington serves the 125th District of New Canaan and Wilton in the state House of Representatives.

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